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School: Slippery Rock University M.S. in Park and Resource Management with emphasis on Environmental Education

Primary Project: Painting the pop bottle greenhouse and raised beds with homemade natural paint

My intern experience at Blue Rock Station came at a point in my life when I was searching for a new start and adventure. I had recently been laid off from my Teacher/Naturalist job at an environmental education center and needed to renew my passion for sustainability. My Blue Rock Station internship did that and much more.

While I could only spend a month with these wonderful folks, it did not take long to feel welcome and part of the family. I've visited several times since my internship and it always feels like I am coming home.

When I arrived I did not have clear goals for my time at Blue Rock. However, I wanted to get involved in as many projects as I could. I had the chance to learn how to milk goats, tend to chickens, and tame llamas. It was often joked that I must have been a llama in a former life so my new title became, "The Llama Whisperer". This is because the Blue Rock llamas can be standoffish to people in general, and one of them, Rita had remained quite wild even though Annie worked with her almost daily. But, much to everyone's surprise Rita allowed me to pet and feed her, completely changing her personality.

My main project at Blue Rock Station was painting the pop bottle greenhouse and raised beds a variety of bright colors. To keep with green living, I wanted to learn how to make natural paint. Natural milk paint that is...and what did we have on the farm, but plenty of goat milk. I tried some natural plant dyes with limited success. In the end, the paint was mostly milk paint with a little store bought added for color. If you visit (or intern, which I strongly suggest you do), you should notice the tropical feel of the greenhouse.

Interning at Blue Rock Station provides a wealth of opportunities. I spent a lot of time gardening: planning, planting, watching, and of course tasting! I also gained more experience in natural building by participating in the building of a straw bale garden shed for a community garden in Dayton and in Jay and Annie's week long straw bale workshop. I have been inspired to hopefully build a similar home for myself someday.

Not all of my time at Blue Rock was work. Laughter, great conversations, good food, new friendships, and quiet introspection all played a part in making my internship an enriching life experience. I would like to thank Jay and Annie for creating this wonderful opportunity for myself and others and encourage anyone considering interning to go for it! Whether you visit for an hour, day, week, or month, you will come away a better person.

Where am I now? Before looking for a full-time job, I am about to embark on a 6 month thru-hike of the Appalachian Trail. I'll be starting in Georgia this March and hoping to make it to Maine by September. If you would like to follow my hike, you may read my trail journal on the website [www.trailjournals.com](http://www.trailjournals.com) under Alicia McCormick, trail name Eureka. Join me as I journey north towards Katahdin.